7: Shklovsky -- 55-56 T-3 (1891-92) 1916 Yakut-1-2
116, 522, 533, 584

"Everything comes to an end, even a Yakut's appetite; and there came a moment when even the 'lean ones' refused more food and the old people fell down, overcome with sleep and repletion. [RCH: at the end of a wedding] The young people had long been awaiting this moment, and now they went out into the meadow and formed themselves into two separate ranks, men in one, and girls in the other. With decorous and mincing steps these two living walls slowly approached each other.

'Ho, boys, ho! Let us enjoy ourselves while we are young! ' chanted one of the men.

'Sing aloud, my throat!' sang a girl.

'Boys, let us dance and laugh while we are still unwed; ere yet the sinews of our strength are drawn out by a woman's little tongue! '

'Girls, let us play while we are still unwed, while we are yet uncaught by the coarse hands of men!'

This was all improvised. Jests, at times coarse, [56] were freely bandied about. On hearing the merry voices some old women, mostly blind, came out of the hut. Their extreme thinness, their unkempt grey hair, their blind eyes and strange dress, gave them a most fantastic appearance, reminding one of the terrible Druid priestesses mentioned in Michelet's 'Histoire de France. ' The old women listened attentively to the young people's hokes, and they also improvised songs in which they made mention of lost youth, the sweetness of man's embrace, and the sorrow of infirmity. I quote one of these improvisations which I noted down at the time, as a specimen of the wild poetry breathed by

these untutored songs:

'How welcome is the warmth of the sun to my aged bones! How joyful to dance with you, my children! This may be the last time I shall sing. Soon will the earth cover my sightless eyes. Next year again you will come here to play, but on my grave the young grass will be green. Cold shall I be there, nor can the hearth fire warm my old body. Dance and sing then, O youth!'

She sang with wild energy: 'And I too will dance with you for the last time. For the last time I shall drink the koumiss, and next spring you will gather here again in the sunlight. Then you will remember the old woman, and she will rejoice in her cold grave. She will hear your songs and from the grave her darkened eyes will see you drink the koumiss. And her happy bones will dance to your merry songs.'

17: Erman--264 N-3 (1828-29) 1850 Yakut
116, 595, 583, 584

"At Delgeisk, an old Yakut told me many particulars respecting the present manners and customs of his people. 'Here in the neighbourhood of the Russians, every one contents himself with one wife; but, among the families of the northern tracts, polygamy is as prevalent as ever. The old custom is kept up in regard to what is called the kolŭim, or the sum for which every Yakut buys his wife. This is usually a number of cattle, to the value of 200 or 300 roobles; but as the family of the man are not always in a condition to pay the stipulated amount at once, it is customary to affiance the boys already in their twelfth year. The betrothed girls may be visited in their parents' yurts by their intended husbands, but cannot be taken home by the latter till the payment of the kolŭim is completed. The sum thus paid goes wholly to the father of the bride, who carries only a few presents with her to her new home. Matchmakers, male and female--the svàti and svàkhui of the Russians, are indispensable as witnesses in settling the price of the bride.'"

17: Erman--331-332 N-3 (1828-29) 1850 Yakut
116, 171, 584

"At last every one sought his berth for the night, having first provided himself with a lighted pipe. The girls took possession [332] of the narrow passage behind the fireplace, and after a little time I saw Daria's Yakutian friend follow them. It may be concluded, therefore, that between affianced Tunguzes, before the payment of the koluim, a kind of relationship subsists, like that known in Switzerland by the name of the kilchang; and from what I heard at Delgeisk on the Lena, it seems that the same custom prevails among the Yakuts."

19: Kharuzin --51-52 E-4 (no date) 1898 Yakut-1-2
116, 562, 582, 584, 884

The Yakut is not in the full possession of his rights until he is married. The unmarried son cannot even ask for a share of the family goods without a particularly valid reason, even if he does not live with his father, for instance, when there is an older son in the family. Only after marriage does the grown-up Yakut step forth as an independent personality. In the question of marriage the authority of the father over the person of his son finds graphic expression. It is true that, in the words of Mr. Pripuzov, in the selection of a bride for the son, or of a bridegroom for the daughter, the consent of the mother carries more weight than that of the father. In this privilege of the women before the man, which, incidentally, is guaranteed by nothing more than moral principles, is contained the only advantage of the wife and mother. But the authority of the father expresses itself above all in the right to give in marriage his under-age son or daughter. The information communicated, for example, by Mr. Shchukin (Zh. M. V. D. [RCH: I have been unable to determine what these initials stand for] 1854, VII, p. 26), that the Yakut himself selects his bride and announces his choice to his parents, is confirmed neither by Mr. Pripuzov nor by other investigators. On the contrary, marriages, or at least betrothals, of under-age children, appear to be very widespread, even at the present time among the Yakuts. "As formerly, so now," writes Mr. Pripuzov, "the Yakuts marry off young children, for which purpose the parents come to an agreement, determining the bride price, and the children have a church marriage upon coming of age." [52] On the basis of other sources there is even reason to consider the betrothal of

young children almost general among the Yakuts: this is done with the object of easing the payment of the bride price, payment of which, in installments, is begun by the parents of the bridegroom immediately after the conclusion of the agreement. "With the payment of the first installments of the bride price, the child-bridegroom acquires, so to speak conjugal rights with respect to his bride, who herself is still but a child. He is often a guest at the home of his future wife, sleeps with her and, having grown up, becomes her factual husband." (Vsesoiuznoe Geograficheskoe Obshchestvo, Vostochno-Sibirskii Otdel, Izviestiia, XXVI, No. 4-5, p. 214).

19: Kharuzin -- 52-53 E-4 (no date) 1898 Yakut-1-2
116, 177, 584, 585

The authority of the parental power is so strong, that despite the fact that marriages are entered upon against the will of the parties involved, cases of secret marriage without the agreement and knowledge of the parents, or the persons acting in their place if the parties involved are orphans, are not encountered among the Yakuts, according to the investigator (Pripuzov). But the influence of Christianity has made itself felt in the fact that if the principals in the marriage are opposed to the arrangement, they can so declare [53] at the wedding ceremony, which is sometimes held considerably later than the Yakut nuptials, (1) which are sometimes held before the couple have come of age,

1. Mr. Pripuzov supplies us with little information concerning wedding rites. The parents of the young couple play the leading role during the wedding. If the young couple are orphans, without mother or father, the place of the parents is taken by the chief. The young couple are supposed to treat him with the respect accorded parents during the wedding. According to Mr. Pripuzov, there are no special rites connected with match-making, with the visit of the bridegroom to the bride, and with the rukobitye (literally: hand-shake signifying the conclusion of agreement). In connection with the arrival of the bride to the house of the bridegroom the following is observed: the wedding procession has to come to the bridegroom's yourta early in the

morning, at sunrise. If the bride comes from a rich family, she rides on a light colored horse. A silver coin is attached to the halter of the horse. The bride gives this coin to one of the young men at the hitching post who seizes the horse's bridle and helps the bride to descend. The father-in-law comes out with an icon and,while the first match-maker holds the icon, he blesses the bride. Afterwards, the bride enters the yourta and there the ceremony of bringing offerings to the hearth is performed by the oldest member of the family. The bridegroom acquires the right to take his bride to his house only after he has paid the kalym ,the price of which depends on previous agreement and the wealth of his parents.

if the bride price has been paid in full. In general, the payment of the bride price gives the bridegroom the right to the bride; therefore in the event of a refusal to wed on the part of the bridegroom, after the payment of the whole or a part of the bride price, the bridegroom or his parents do not have the right to demand the return of the expended money; on the other hand, if the refusal comes from the bride, her parents must make up all outlays on the part of the bridegroom.

over land), thereby sustaining the fiction of community of clan interests. A poor kinsman used to call a toyon who had robbed him of his possessions aga (father), and was expected to look upon him as his "benefactor."

Family Customs

The primary unit in the social structure of the Yakuts had long been the family (kergen or yal), which consisted of husband, wife and children, sometimes with the inclusion of other relatives living in the same house. The married sons were usually regarded as a separate household. The family was monogamous, but not too long ago (at the beginning of the 19th century) polygamy also existed among the wealthier section of the population, although the number of wives did not usually exceed two or three. In such cases the wives lived apart, each one running a separate household; the Yakuts explained this custom as a convenient way of looking after the livestock, which were distributed among several wives.

Marriage was preceded, sometimes for a long interval, by matchmaking. There were also traces of exogamy (known from the 17th-century documents); until quite late, males tried to pick their wives from a different clan, while the richer people, not satisfied with this, sought their brides as far as possible in other naslegs or even other ulusy. Having selected the bride, the groom or his parents sent their relatives as matchmakers. The latter, using special ceremonies and conventional language, sought to obtain the consent of the future bride's parents to the marriage, and on the extent of the bride-price (khalyym, or suluu). The consent of the girl herself was not asked at all in the old days. The bride-price consisted of livestock, but the extent of it varied considerably, from one or two to many dozen head; the bride-price always included the meat of a slaughtered beast. At the end of the 19th century there was a strong trend towards taking the bride payment in actual money. Some of the payment (kurum) was spent on the wedding feast (in the 17th-century documents, the word kurum sometimes meant the bride payment as a whole). The payment was considered compulsory, and a girl who married without it considered herself dishonored. The suitor was assisted by relatives, sometimes even by distant kinsmen, in arranging the payment, thus showing the ancient view of a wedding as an all-clan affair. The relatives of the bride also took part in distributing the payment obtained. On his side, the suitor received a dowry (enn'e), partly in livestock and meat, but more often in clothing and utensils; the value of the dowry averaged half the value of the bride-price.

The clan also played an important part in the actual wedding ceremony, which was attended by a large number of guests, relatives of the bride and groom, neighbors and so on. The festivities lasted several days and consisted of extensive feasting, different rituals and amusements, games, dancing, and so on. Not only did the bride and groom refrain from occupying the central place in all this festivity, they hardly took part at all.

In similar fashion to the wedding ceremony, the kinship terminology has also retained traces of the earlier forms of marriage. The name for the son—uol—actually means boy or youth; the word for daughter—kyys—means girl or little girl; father is *aga* (literally, "older"); wife is oyokh, but in some places the wife is simply called d'akhtar (woman), emeekhsin ("old woman") and so on; the husband is er, the older brother is ubay (bii), the younger brother is ini; the elder sister is ed'iy (agas) and the younger sister is balys. The last four terms are also used to denote uncles and aunts, nephews and nieces, and other relatives. Generally speaking,